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THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2015

Dual duty councillors

Southern tier mayors weigh in on double-duty regional/city representation.
Page 3

Beware ticks

Niagara Region accepts ticks from public to test for Lyme disease.
Page 14

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FRAUD: Port Colborne resident raises awareness of telephone scam

Niagara woman says free trip too good to be true

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

When Barb Gaverluk picked up the phone, she knew something was off.

As the conversation continued, red flags began to fly.

The Port Colborne woman felt the free trip she was being offered was too good to be true — and she was right.

The call came July 4 from someone claiming to be an Air Canada representative.

Gaverluk, who had travelled with the airline earlier this year, listened intently as the caller explained she had won a free cruise.

But there was a catch — she first had to purchase another vacation at a discounted rate.

When the caller began pushing for credit card information and Gaverluk began asking more questions, the conversation came to a dead halt.

"They hung up on me," the 57-year-old elementary

school teacher said.

Wanting to prevent anyone from falling for the scam, Gaverluk first called Air Canada to confirm the hoax and then contacted the RCMP to report the incident.

She then began calling friends and family to warn them, though some had already received a similar call.

"It's big in our area right now," Gaverluk said.

"I didn't give them anything. I want to make sure no one does."

She provided police the caller's phone number, which appeared to be from right in Port Colborne.

That's a ploy often used by scammers, said Det. Sgt. Paul Spiridi of the Niagara Regional Police fraud unit.

If a call appears to be local, rather than from a distant, unrecognizable area code, people are more likely to pick up the phone, he said.

Spiridi often hears about



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Barb Gaverluk, who is warning the community of a telephone scam in Niagara, is pictured outside her home.

calls received from people claiming to be with various hotels and airlines offering too-good-to-be-true deals.

"They're fishing for credit

card numbers," he said, while advising anyone who receives such a call to immediately hang up the phone.

"Just say you're not inter-

ested and hang up. Don't get into a debate. Don't waste your time."

"With these types of scams, the best thing is prevention,"

Spiridi said, adding the more awareness is raised that the calls are a hoax, the less people will fall for it.

He encouraged people to spread the word among friends and family to prevent loved ones, particularly vulnerable individuals, from providing any financial information by phone.

"The chances of catching these people is hard, but the chances of recovering money is even harder."

Spiridi said police are generally aware of the scams circulating in the area, so a phone call to NRP is not always necessary, unless, of course, money was taken.

Most recently, the region has been plagued with calls from people claiming to be from Canada Revenue Agency seeking overdue payments — another scam Spiridi wants Niagarans to be aware of.

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■ CRITICAL COMMENTS

Region worker loses job over online remarks

RAY SPITERI

Postmedia Network

A St. Catharines man says he was let go from his job at Niagara Region after posting anonymous online comments that included criticism of regional representatives and other politicians.

Greg Miller, who had been employed by Niagara Region for the past four years, said he was let go Friday after he was linked to the account NiagaraNext, which has been posting comments on Twitter and in the comment sections of media outlets in Niagara.

The 28-year-old, who was a co-ordinator with Niagara Region Transit, said he created the account before he was hired by the Region and decided to carry on with the account during his employment there.

"I'm sorry that if what I said has offended anyone personally," Miller said in an inter-

view Saturday. "It was never my intention. My intention was to merely voice my opinion as a citizen living in Niagara.

"I understand the consequences that I have suffered. I care a lot about this community. It's difficult to stifle that. This was just an outlet to voice my opinion."

Niagara Region chief administrative officer Harry Schlange said at the request of Regional Chair Alan Caslin, he launched an investigation Friday into the source of comments made by an anonymous poster.

Schlange would not say how the Region learned of those comments or how they were able to associate them with Miller.

"We refrain from talking about any HR matters. Our internal investigation has concluded and we took the appropriate action to resolve the issue," Schlange

said on Saturday, not disclosing what that action was.

"We consider the matter closed. This is not indicative of the values of our corporation and is not representative of our dedicated staff."

Caslin could not be reached for comment over the weekend.

Instead, his spokesman Jason Tamming e-mailed Postmedia Niagara a statement attributed to Caslin.

"I am concerned by the social-media comments targeting regional councillors and the priorities of our council that were brought to my attention by (the online news agency) Bullet News," read the statement.



GREG MILLER

"Regional staff consistently conduct themselves with the highest standards of professionalism and integrity and we will continue to uphold those values."

Caslin's office did not elaborate on what comments or information Bullet News provided it with.

In a Bullet News article about the matter, the news outlet acknowledged information was provided by them to the chair's office linking the personal e-mail account of a regional employee to the name NiagaraNext.

In an interview, Bullet News managing editor John Robbins said the information he provided the chair's office when he called to seek comment on a story he was working on — an e-mail address and IP address associated with the NiagaraNext account — was publicly avail-

able to anyone who uses the third-party commenting system called Disqus.

"I didn't give (the Region) any information that wasn't publicly available. As a journalist, if you're going to ask for comment, you have to give a certain amount of information to the person for them to give you an intelligent comment," said Robbins, adding the Region never asked him for any information.

Miller said he did tweet and post comments at work, from his work computer, but "only on lunch breaks.

"Never on company time, only on lunch breaks or after hours," he said. "I likely used my work computer during those lunch hours to tweet or post. It never took away from my work."

"I was at work eight hours or more a day, but 90 minutes of that is designated as breaks or personal time. I've never had

anyone express an issue with my work and have received praise for my work with local governments and community groups."

Miller said his intention was to always focus on the actions of politicians and their decisions, not personal attacks.

"I voiced my opinions on regional, municipal, provincial and federal matters," he said. "I never intended to be critical of the politicians themselves, but rather some of their decisions."

"I understand why they (the Region) did what they did, but I would suggest that perhaps more time should have been given to the decision (to let him go)."

Miller said he's a part of the NEXTNiagara panel that engages and advocates for young people in the region; is a board member of the St. Catharines Rotary Club; coaches high school basketball and has participated in

■ POLITICS: St. Catharines regional councillor wrote anti-gay-marriage tweet, apologizes to anyone who was offended

Voters will judge Petrowski's comments: politicians

ROB HOULE

Postmedia Network

Andy Petrowski's controversial tweet and subsequent comments over same-sex marriage could come back to haunt the St. Catharines regional councillor, some of his peers say.

In a recent tweet that has since been removed from his Twitter account, Petrowski was critical of U.S. President Barack Obama for singing a Christian hymn at a funeral service on the same day he said he supported same-sex marriages.

Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop, also a Christian, said he does not share Petrowski's religious leanings toward same-sex marriage.

"I take a different view of the

situation than Andy, but that's personal philosophy," Redekop said. "I think it really boils down to judge not, lest you be judged. And so I live and let live."

Redekop, who noted he likes Petrowski, said it is not up to him to comment on whether the two-term regional councillor was right or wrong in espousing his religious belief.

"We live in this great democracy, and elected representatives are accountable to those who vote for them," Redekop said. "And so that's really a question best answered by people who vote for him."

"And when it comes to another election, people may take this into account, or they may not, but it's not really for me to comment on whether

he should be saying the things that he says. He's accountable to those who vote for him."

On June 27, Petrowski tweeted: "Obama singing 'Amazing Grace' the day he condones same-sex marriage. Talk about a perverted mind?"

Asked about the tweet by Postmedia Network columnist Grant LaFleche, Petrowski, a devout Christian, equated homosexuality with murder in that they are both considered sins.

"You can't stand for the Christian faith and say you are pro same-sex marriage, because Christianity deems marriage to be between a man and woman. It's simple," he told LaFleche.

"If you are now going to say, 'I believe in murder and I call

myself a Christian,' that would be perverted. That would be twisted. It's the same thing, the same concept."

Welland Mayor Frank Campion echoed his Fort Erie counterpart.

"It's my belief as a politician that it's up to each politician to determine how they act and what they do," Campion said, "and basically it's up to their employers to determine if they're doing the right thing or not in their eyes, which would



ANDY PETROWSKI

be his constituents.

"You sort of have to self-regulate in those situations. If that's what he wants to do, that's up to him as far as I'm concerned. Now his constituents may love it or hate it, but some day he'll have to face their decisions on that."

Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs said diplomacy is required from politicians.

"I think as elected officials we have to be careful. We're all entitled to personal opinion, but I think when we're elected there's a responsibility to be very careful on how we phrase things ... because we don't ever want anything to be misconstrued as hurtful to any particular group."

"I always do my best to be diplomatic, and think we should

all be that way."

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati said local politicians walk a fine line between their personal beliefs and advocating municipal matters.

"I think there's a responsibility to use your higher profile for positive messages, but it's positive depending on whose perspective, so one person's positive is another's negative," Diodati said. "I think there is a role, when you have an elevated profile, to use it and advocate, but the question is what side of the issue are you supposed to advocate for?"

"I think it's a tough thing to temper."

Diodati said his belief is "everybody should be so lucky to love and be loved."

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■ **GOVERNANCE:** Move by St. Catharines has other municipalities talking

Dual-duty proposal draws lukewarm interest

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

"Be careful what you wish for."

Those were the words of advice offered by Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney after learning St. Catharines council might move toward a dual city-regional councillor governance model.

“

It will be a tremendous amount of work for those councillors who do double duty, especially if they're also employed."

Port Colborne Mayor
John Maloney

St. Catharines councillors voted 9-4 Monday to ask Niagara Region to apply to the province to allow the change, which would see St. Catharines represented by the mayor, six councillors who would sit on both city and regional councils, as well as another six councillors who would sit only on city council.

Currently, St. Catharines has 12 city councillors with two per ward, plus six regional councillors.

Before the topic reaches the regional table for discussion, Niagara's southern tier mayors weighed in on the concept and whether

it has potential to be introduced in their respective communities.

"My thoughts are 'Be careful what you wish for,'" Maloney said of the St. Catharines decision.

"It will be a tremendous amount of work for those councillors who do double duty, especially if they're also employed."

Maloney warned it might mean a loss of efficiency if councillors have difficulty keeping up with their responsibilities at both the regional and local levels.

It's a concept Port Colborne has not considered implementing, he said.

The city's existing model, with one elected regional councillor and the mayor representing the lakeside city at the Region, "works fine for us," he added, and "hasn't been an issue."

The double-duty model has come up in previous years within Welland council chambers, but "never really took off," said Mayor Frank Campion.

He believes the move by St. Catharines might again spark discussions locally.

"As far as I'm concerned, it has some merit," he said, as it reduces the combined number of councillors seated at both levels of government.

Having dual-role councillors could potentially mean "closer contact between the Region and the municipalities," he said, though more information is still needed.

Campion said he wants to know more about the "mechanics" of the dual role, including the details of the process through which

those seats would be filled.

Pelham council has also previously had informal discussions about the governance model, Mayor Dave Augustyn said. The topic arose last term during a review of the town's ward boundaries, but wasn't taken any further.

Augustyn believes the dual role might work easily in St. Catharines, but less so in communities with fewer seats at the regional table than it has wards in the

community.

"It works easily because there are 12 representatives, one local and one regional in every ward. That makes sense because there's fair representation across the community," he said.

But for Pelham, which has three wards and only two regional council seats, it doesn't seem feasible, he added.

Municipalities that have an at-large council model, with no wards dividing the

community, might have an easier time introducing the concept, Augustyn said.

While Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs was once opposed to the idea of the dual model, she said she is now "warming up" to the idea.

She once associated the concept with amalgamation of the municipalities — which she is "completely opposed to" — but now believes it can exist separately.

Jeffs looks forward to

hearing more on the topic and discussing ways the proposed St. Catharines move could impact Wainfleet.

"For St. Catharines it might work, but I don't know if it would work for smaller municipalities," she said.

"There are a lot of questions to be asked, but I'm open to the discussion."

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A council without courage says nothing

"I confess I enjoy democracy immensely," wrote the late, great H.L. Mencken. "It is incomparably idiotic, and hence incomparably amusing."

Mencken's assessment is a tad too cynical for my tastes — democracy is still better than any other political system on offer — but there are days when it is hard to argue with his conclusion.

This is particularly true if one expects to find some true moral fibre and leadership among the ranks of our elected officials on regional council.

It seems when facing an uncomfortable issue, most of them would rather offer up empty rhetorical bromides rather than say anything meaningful.

Such was the case on Thursday when The Standard asked regional councillors


**GRANT
LAFLECHE**

about volatile comments about gay marriage made by St. Catharines regional Coun. Andy Petrowski.

I had interviewed Petrowski about a June 27 tweet he made about U.S. President Barack Obama singing Amazing Grace at a funeral on the same day he condoned gay marriage. Given his belief that gay marriage contravenes Christian theology, Petrowski said the president has a "perverted mind" for singing that old spiritual.

When I pressed him for an explanation, Petrowski said marriage is decreed by his god to be only between a man and a woman. You cannot

call yourself a Christian if you believe in gay marriage, he said, just as you cannot call yourself a Christian if you believe in murder. Both are sins in his view.

Say what you will about Petrowski, but I've never known the man to hide his true colours. One might find him bellicose and some of his opinions repugnant, but there is never any question where he stands.

His anti-gay marriage views are odious, harmful and ignorant. But I will at least give him props for having the courage his colleagues in the council chamber lack.

For when they were confronted with what he said, Petrowski's colleagues avoided saying anything of substance.

Reporter Rob Houle asked some councillors what they thought of Petrowski's comments or if they believe he

should be censured for such statements.

A few, including Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop and Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati — both believers — did not share Petrowski's anti-gay marriage views.

They, along with a few others, said politicians, like anyone else, has a right to free speech. But like anyone else, exercising that right comes with consequences, and Petrowski may pay a price come election day.

The most pathetic responses came from those who refused to discuss the issue at all, including regional chairman Alan Caslin.

Dealing with the personal statements made by members of council is not his job, he said. Since Petrowski offered an apology on Twitter, Caslin considers the matter closed. (Petrowski's Twitter

account has since been closed. His apology, it should be noted, was not a retraction of his anti-same-sex marriage statements, only that he was sorry for offending anyone. This is not a trivial difference.)

Not one of them would venture as far to overtly disagreed with the content of Petrowski's statements or, if it be the case, agreed with him.

Even those who hinted they have no issue with same-sex marriage, would not openly support the right of our homosexual brothers and sisters to be treated equally under the law.

And while a few said there is a balance to strike, as politicians, between airing personal views and representing constituents, none would talk about the damage done to members of our community when an elected representative uses words like "perverted" to

describe them.

Issues like gay marriage are not for regional governments to decide. But that is not the point.

When regional councillors speak, in council chambers or on their personal Twitter page, they represent their constituency. And when they issue discriminatory statements about members of that constituency who have done no wrong, those statements should not be met with silence even if they touch upon issues outside their political responsibilities.

That is part of what leadership is.

I find it sad there wasn't any courage to be found on council on this issue and that they chose to say nothing in order to shelter their political fortunes, rather than taking a stand on behalf of those they represent.

Charles S. Hebard



SKIP GILLHAM

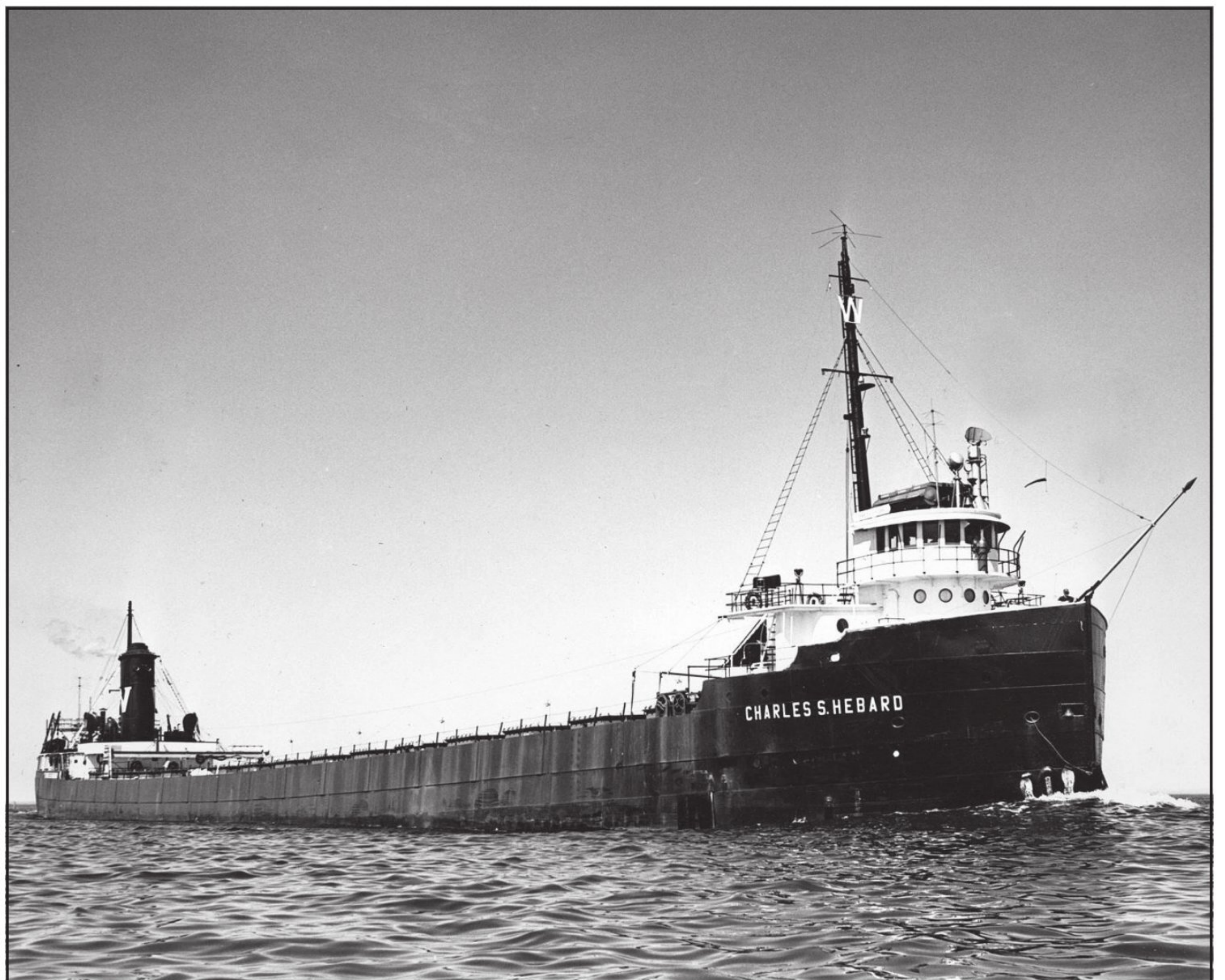
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Pete Worden, courtesy Roger LeLievre Photo

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RAY SPITERI

Postmedia Network

Teachers and students in Niagara are being trained to work with technologies to help with standardized testing.

Students in grades 3 and 6 across Ontario are required to demonstrate their reading, writing and math skills as part of Education Quality and Accountability Office assessments.

Frank Napoli, special needs

facilitator and technology support with Niagara Catholic District School Board, has been working with elementary and secondary classrooms across the board to offer training and tips to make studying easier.

Napoli has been teaching students about how accessibility tools and features built into Microsoft devices and Microsoft Office, such as speech recognition to keyboard shortcuts, can help them get through their classroom and homework

more quickly and efficiently. This allows students to focus on their learning, while building more confidence and independence.

"(Training) has been ongoing for about a year-and-a-half,"

Napoli said Wednesday morning, prior to a session with a Grade 4 class at St. James Catholic Elementary School in St. Catharines.

"I've done about 40-50% of our board."

Napoli said a speech feature in Microsoft Word allows students to actually hear what they've written.

"We always have our students proof read, now they actually get to listen to what

they have created."

Napoli has helped a number of teachers impacted by carpal-tunnel syndrome to complete report cards with the help of Microsoft's speech-recognition software.

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■ REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Mixed reaction to call for one Niagara municipality

ROB HOULE

Postmedia Network

A call from business leaders for one level of government in Niagara came as no surprise to Brian Heit.

"I've been dealing with these business people for 25 years, I've

known that," the longtime regional councillor from St. Catharines said.

"I've sat at city council. I've known that if we want to achieve something great for Niagara, we really need to speak with one voice, not be 13 voices."

At a roundtable discussion last week at Niagara Region headquarters in Thorold between Chair Alan Caslin, budget head David Barrick, audit committee chair Tony Quirk and business leaders, the politicians were told the future success of Niagara lies

with the elimination of lower tiers of government.

Business leaders Tom Rankin, Spencer Fox, Mark Sherk, George Darte and Larry Vaughan called on elected officials to demand the province eliminate the lower tiers of government in favour of an amalgamated City of Niagara.

They said the multiple levels of government and their bureaucracies are a roadblock to keeping and attracting businesses to Niagara and the duplication of services between the 12 municipalities and regional government is a major stressor on property taxes.

"That's the belief I have," Heit said.

"That's the reason I came up to the region to try do (create one Niagara). I believe that that is our salvation. That that's how we're going to achieve greatness, by being one Niagara."

Former regional councillor and regional chair Debbie Zimmerman said one Niagara is a goal "they should definitely be working toward."

She said the business community has long complained about having to deal with multiple levels of government and bureaucracy.

"You've got to take a serious look at what the business community has been saying for some time," she said. "Thirteen

administrations is just not sustainable."

With one Niagara as the goal, by way of an example she cited municipal transit as an area where dollars could be saved on the road to amalgamation.

"Do we need nine transit structures in this region — and that's what we have currently. No," she said.

"It starts with some of the simple things we've had on the table for a long time. I don't think that there's going to be any wholesale dismantling of the municipalities, but it is getting to that focused drive to reduce these number of level of services we have for the same thing."

Caslin said Wednesday he heard the businesspeople's argument clearly.

"I heard the message loud and clear from them as to what they wanted, and that was the elimination of waste, the reduction of costs," Caslin said.

"They talked about several methods, including amalgamating Niagara, but what was important and what I took from that was their desire to get taxes reduced and elimination of waste."

Caslin said the issue of amalgamation should be left with the community.

"It doesn't need to be Al Caslin's opinion, it needs to be the opinion of the community, and that question hasn't even been broached yet."

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS OF ENBRIDGE GAS DISTRIBUTION INC.

Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. has applied for pre-approval of the cost consequences associated with a long-term natural gas transportation contract with NEXUS Gas Transmission.

Learn more. Have your say.

Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. has applied to the Ontario Energy Board for pre-approval of the cost consequences associated with a 15-year gas transportation contract commencing on November 1, 2017. The total cost for NEXUS capacity over the term of the contract is approximately \$421.6 million (US). If its application is approved, Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. says that the benefits will include:

- enhancing its gas supply plan through improved reliability, diversity, and flexibility
- supporting the development of new natural gas pipeline infrastructure
- allowing direct access to new sources of natural gas supply in the Appalachian Basin

Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. says that its forecast cost of gas supply via the NEXUS pipeline is competitive with alternative pipeline projects or existing pipeline infrastructure that accesses the Dawn Hub.

THE ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD IS HOLDING A PUBLIC HEARING

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) will hold a public hearing to consider the application filed by Enbridge Gas. We will question Enbridge Gas on the case. We will also hear arguments from individuals and from groups that represent the customers of Enbridge Gas. At the end of this hearing, the OEB will decide whether or not to pre-approve the costs as requested in the application.

The OEB is an independent and impartial public agency. We make decisions that serve the public interest. Our goal is to promote a financially viable and efficient energy sector that provides you with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

BE INFORMED AND HAVE YOUR SAY

You have the right to information regarding this application and to be involved in the process.

- You can review the application filed by Enbridge on the OEB's website now.
- You can file a letter with your comments, which will be considered during the hearing.
- You can become an active participant (called an intervenor). Apply by **July 27, 2015** or the hearing will go ahead without you and you will not receive any further notice of the proceeding.
- At the end of the process, you can review the OEB's decision and its reasons on our website.

LEARN MORE

Our file number for this case is **EB-2015-0175**. To learn more about this hearing, find instructions on how to file letters or become an intervenor, or to access any document related to this case, please select the file number **EB-2015-0175** from the list on the OEB website: www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/notice. You can also phone our Consumer Relations Centre at 1-877-632-2727 with any questions.

ORAL VS. WRITTEN HEARINGS

There are two types of OEB hearings – oral and written. The OEB will determine at a later date whether to proceed by way of a written or oral hearing. If you think an oral hearing is needed, you can write to the OEB to explain why by **July 27, 2015**.

PRIVACY

If you write a letter of comment, your name and the content of your letter will be put on the public record and the OEB website. However, your personal telephone number, home address and e-mail address will be removed. If you are a business, all your information will remain public. If you apply to become an intervenor, all information will be public.

This rate hearing will be held under section 36 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, S.O. 1998 c.15 (Schedule B).



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LEAVE THE CAR AT HOME

Cyclists welcome at local businesses

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Business groups across the region have signed on to participate in the inaugural year of the Bike Friendly Business Networks.

Bike Friendly Business networks have come together in Welland, Pelham, Grimsby and Thorold. The initiative is a partnership between Healthy Living Niagara and the business associations from the communities.

Lisa Gallant, co-ordinator for Healthy Living Niagara, said the project is aimed at encouraging people to leave their cars behind for small, in-town errands. Gallant said studies have shown that active transportation has positive effects on the economy for downtown businesses. The motto — bike local, shop local — reflects that idea.

Natalie Stickles, marketing co-ordinator for Pelham Business Association, said it made sense for the community to open up to cyclists, given its location in relation to local bike trails.

Her husband, Gary Stickles, owns a restaurant that is part of the network, Mokus Restaurant of Fon-thill. He said that it makes sense for his

business to give this a try.

"Well, biking is kind of an up-and-coming part of the tourist sector. A lot of people are coming down from Toronto, Hamilton and they do the bike tours around through the Niagara region and we've hooked up with that," said Stickles.

His business, as with others in the networks, will have little green signs in their window that read "Bike Friendly." They all must meet certain criteria in order to be in the network, such as providing water for cyclists, bike repair kits, tour maps and bike racks.

Stickles also said they will have healthy food choices available to cater towards the healthy lifestyles of cyclists.

Other businesses are also offering different incentives to encourage cyclists to come in, such as discounted rates and home delivery if you can't carry your purchase on your bike.

For more information on Bike Friendly businesses, and for a full list of participating businesses, visit www.healthylivingniagara.com.



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■ CRIME

Drug raids nab nine suspects

BILL SAWCHUK

Postmedia Network

Nine suspects were arrested July 9 in a series of raids aimed at breaking up a St. Catharines-based drug trafficking ring.

"It is a group from St. Catharines, but as far as specific ties to known criminal organizations, we are still investigating that," said Staff Sgt. Shawn Clarkson of the Niagara Regional Police.

"They are all friends from St. Catharines. Most are under 30 and life-long residents. They were doing fairly well for themselves — but those days are over."

The investigation, nicknamed Project Bluenose, uncovered evidence of a large cocaine and marijuana trafficking ring with ties to Toronto and Mississauga, Clarkson said.

"I was woken up by a couple of dogs barking wildly and a woman screaming," said a neighbour in one of the apartments raided on Roehampton Ave.

"I thought it was a fight or something. Then there was a big crash. It all happened in 10 or 15 seconds, and I heard rapid bangs like gunfire, six or seven shots.

"It made me jump up. I thought someone was getting killed next door or something. I looked out and I saw some

people running away. My wife said I should call 911. I did. They said not to worry and go back to bed."

The neighbour said after the call to 911, he saw four unmarked police cars coming down the street together. They parked and about a half-dozen officers walked directly to the apartment, he said.

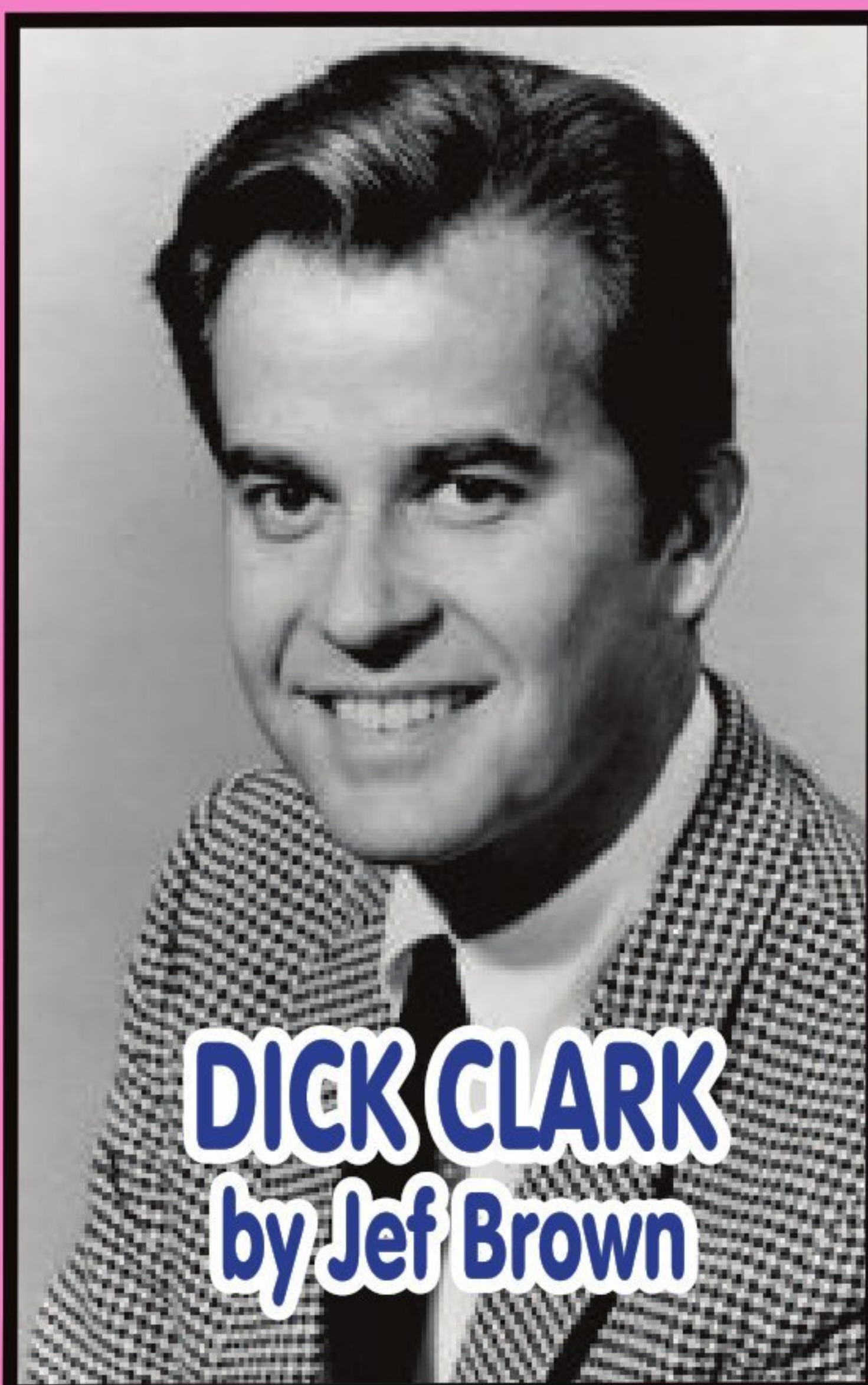
"Then I saw tactical (officers) coming out of the apartment. They brought out a duffle bag and threw it in a white cube van that was parked in front," the neighbour said.

"Those guys left after a couple of minutes. The rest of the officers remained around for a couple of hours and started searching a car that was parked in front. They pulled out a white package and kept looking, but didn't find anything else. They took the car away."

The following people are charged:

Haris Rekic, 27, of St. Catharines, Kevin Debon, 29, of St. Catharines, Marvin Pineda, 28, of St. Catharines, Laura Cortes, 26, of St. Catharines, Darren Haines, 26, of St. Catharines, Senad Hirkic, 27, of St. Catharines, Blake Richards, 27, of St. Catharines, Tiarnan Shuttleworth, 25, of Toronto, Luis Soza-Cordero, 25, of Mississauga, Jesse Orr, 25, of Toronto, Michael Mills, 34, of St. Catharines, Wilber Morales, 29, of St. Catharines.

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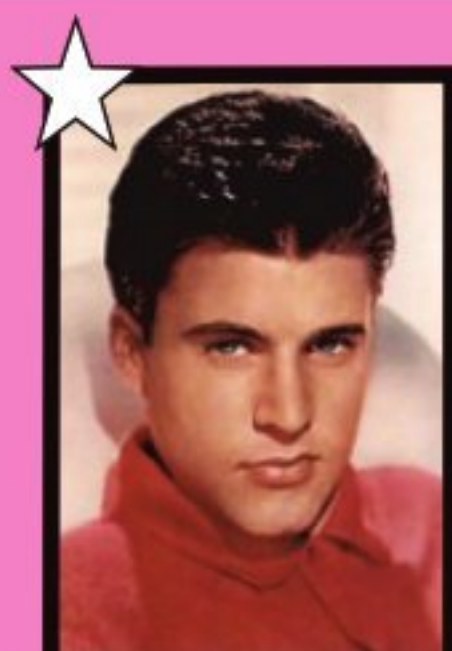
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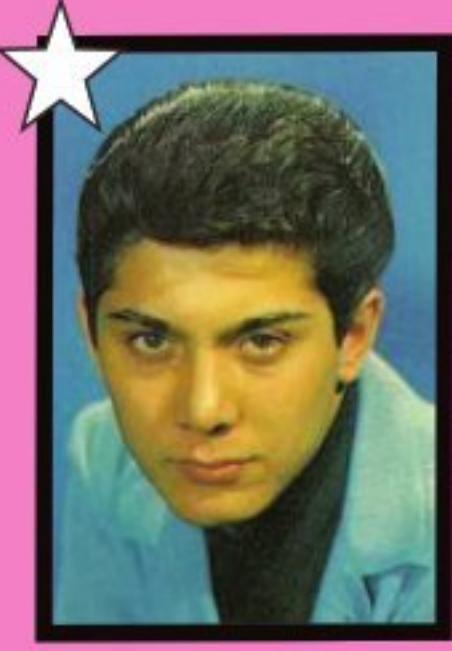
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Police hunting quick-change bandit

Police are asking for the public's help in finding a man they believe changed his appearance after robbing a St. Catharines gas station.

The robbery at Gales Gas bar on St. Paul St. W. happened Sunday, July 5.

Police said a white male, 20 to 25 years of age, walked into the gas bar by himself at 7:20 p.m. and told the clerk, "This is a robbery. I got a knife."

He then left the area in a vehicle and was dropped off a few minutes later at the Walmart on Vansickle Rd., where police said he changed his appearance and left.

Investigators believe the man may

have ties to the Strada Blvd. area of St. Catharines.

The suspect is described as about six feet tall with a heavy build, a round chubby or young face and sandy-coloured hair.

During the gas bar robbery, he was wearing a black-hooded sweatshirt with white drawstrings and a small white logo. He had faded jeans and oil-coloured aviator sunglasses.

When he left the Walmart, police said, he was wearing a black baseball cap and black T-shirt with small white logo on the sleeve.

Police are asking anyone with information to contact detectives at 905-688-4111, ext. 4383.

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NOTICE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Project Name: **Niagara Region Wind Farm**

Project Location: The proposed project is located within Haldimand County and Niagara Region (including the Townships of Wainfleet and West Lincoln and the Town of Lincoln). The electrical interconnection components are located within the Town of Lincoln and the Township of West Lincoln, in Niagara Region, and in Haldimand County in southern Ontario.

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

FWRN (formerly Niagara Region Wind Corporation) is inviting interested members of the public, municipalities, Aboriginal communities, stakeholders and neighbours to participate on the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) for the facility. The purpose of the CLC is to facilitate two-way communication between NRWC and members of the public with respect to issues relating to the construction, installation, use, operation, maintenance and retirement of the facility. Through this CLC process, NRWC will provide regular updates and discuss issues/concerns related to the facility.

At minimum, the CLC will meet 4 times over a 2 year period. The CLC meetings will be held in the evening and in a convenient, local meeting area. CLC meetings are open to the public.

Stantec Consulting Ltd. has been retained by FWRN to be the Chair and Facilitator for the CLC process. If you have any questions, wish to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of CLC members or wish to express an interest in joining the CLC, please contact Krista Walkey, CLC Chair and Facilitator at Krista.Walkey@stantec.com or (519) 575-4133.

Project Description:

Pursuant to the Act and Regulation, the facility, in respect of which the project is to be engaged in, is considered to be a Class 4 Wind Facility. The facility received its Renewal Energy Approval (REA) in 2014. This facility would have a total maximum name plate capacity of 230 MW consisting of 77 turbines (80 potential locations identified). The project location is shown in the adjacent map.

Documents for Public Inspection

NRWC has obtained and prepared supporting documents in order to comply with the requirements of the Act and Regulation. Copies of all final documents are available for public inspection online at www.nrwc.ca/projectdocuments.

Project Contacts and Information:

To learn more about the project, or to communicate questions or comments, please contact:

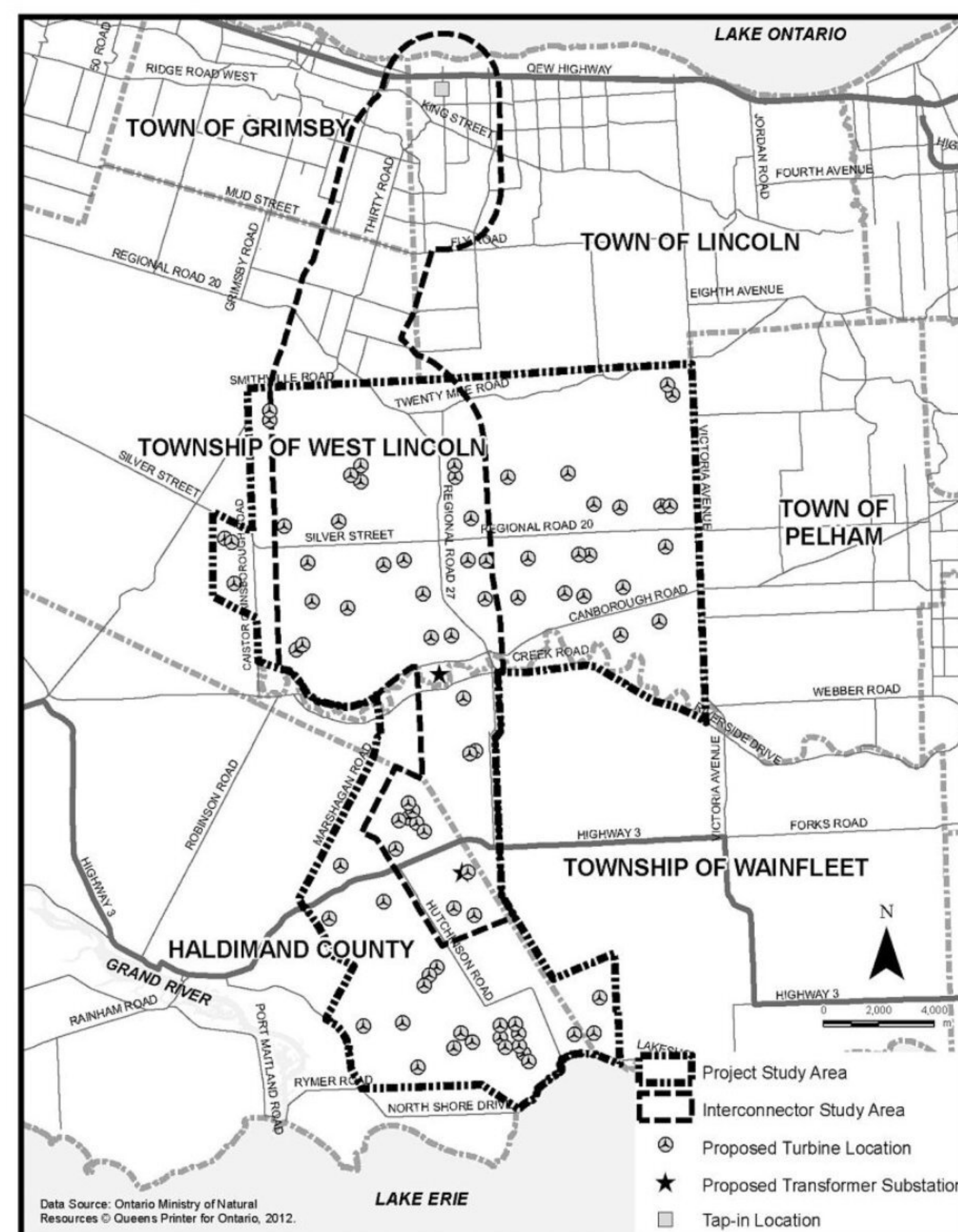
Project Email Address: info@nrwc.ca

Project Website: www.nrwc.ca

Project Phone Number: 819-363-6491 or 1-844-363-6491 (toll free)

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The “Project Study Area” was established to scope the siting of the proposed wind turbines, collector lines, access roads and temporary work areas. The “Interconnector Study Area” was established to scope the location of the proposed 115kV transmission line, transformer substations and tap-in location. The “Project Location” occurs within these areas, is identified in the Draft REA reports and will be presented at the public meetings.

Information will be collected and used in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This information will be used to assist FWRN in meeting applicable environmental approvals requirements. This material will be maintained on file for use during the project and may be included in project documentation. Unless indicated otherwise, personal information and all comments will become part of the public record and publicly released as part of project documentation.



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BUSINESS

Rich's hopes to resume operations next week

RAY SPITERI
Niagara Falls Review

Rich Products hopes to get some of its production lines up and running this weekend and to resume normal operations early next week, says Dwight Gram, vice president of corporate communications.

All of the leftover ammonia from a leak that killed one man and sent two to hospital Monday has been cleaned, while plant associates have been cleaning the rest of the plant as the Ministry of Labour continues to investigate the tragedy.

"Not only did we remove all of the ammonia, we also had to clean up all of the dough on production lines, in mixers and across the plant that was left when production was shut down immediately," said Gram.

The leak happened at around noon Monday in an engine room of the Hagey Ave. plant.

Gram said the ammonia also damaged some of the wiring in the engine room, which had to be repaired.

Ministry spokesman William Lin said their requirement for Rich Products to preserve the scene has been lifted. He said the ministry is now requiring the company to not restart the equipment in engine room No. 2 until it is conformed safe to do so, and to not restart engine room No. 3 until it is confirmed safe to restart associated equipment and electrical supply.

Rich Products is a food company based in Buffalo, N.Y. It operates 36 plants around the world with about 10,000 employees. There are two plants in Canada — one in

Woodbridge and one in Fort Erie.

The Fort Erie plant employs around 285 workers, 85 of whom were on site when the leak occurred Monday, as well as 10 contract workers. The man who died was one of those contract workers.

The ministry has said one of the two people sent to hospital with non life-threatening injuries was a Rich Products employee, while the other was a roofing contractor.

The ministry's investigation will determine what led to the incident and whether there was any violation of workplace health and safety laws.

When asked how the week-long closure has impacted business at Rich Products, Gram said: "No question its been a challenge, (but) we had minimal disruptions."

That's because, he said, the company had an adequate amount of inventory built up.

"We started to consider producing some of what we produce in Fort Erie at our other facilities, but if we're back up and running this weekend and certainly by next week, we are in pretty good shape."

Gram said he credits the associates at the plant for how they've handled themselves this week.

"They not only did a tremendous job executing all of the emergency protocols when the ammonia was released, but also their unbelievable efforts to get the plant up and running from a mechanical, sanitation and clean up standpoint."

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■ **NIAGARA REGION:** Councillors opt to put St. Catharines building on hold

Welland getting new POA courthouse

ROB HOULE

Postmedia Network

Welland is getting a new courthouse.

Niagara Region councillors recently endorsed a staff recommendation that calls for the construction of a new provincial offences courthouse on Duncan St. in Welland.

Including the purchase of land, the price tag for the build is estimated at \$12.4 million. In voting to support the staff recommendation, which was supported by the corporate services committee on June 3, council also agreed to put the future of a planned new courthouse in St. Catharines on hold.

The previous term of

regional council gave the green light to the build of the POA courthouses to replace rented spaces in Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catharines, but recent machinations by the provincial government that would see some Provincial Offences Act charges dealt with online call into question the need for Niagara to have two POA courthouses.

Councillors agreed with staff to begin construction, post haste, and the cheaper of the two builds. A new St. Catharines courthouse is estimated to cost \$14.3 million.

There was no debate on the issue, as Welland Mayor Frank Campion immediately after introducing the staff report and the recommendations

To be quite honest, when I stood up to make that motion, I really wasn't expecting to end debate, I just threw it out on the chance it might fly. It was just one of those things that was unplanned."

Welland Mayor Frank Campion

within, asked that the question of support be put to a vote without discussion. Council voted 21-7 to support staff and the decision made at the corporate services committee meeting.

Outside council cham-

bers, Campion said he did not expect his motion to not have debate would pass.

"To be quite honest, when I stood up to make that motion, I really wasn't expecting to end debate, I just threw it out on the chance it might fly. It was

just one of those things that was unplanned," Campion said, adding he felt the issue has had sufficient debate.

Campion said his view that Welland is the best site for Niagara's lone POA courthouse, should that be the ultimate decision, is based on fact, not parochialism. The staff recommendation of a new courthouse in Welland, he said, "is logical, fiscally responsible. It is the best solution based on the facts."

St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timms said following the recent council meeting he was not happy with the decision.

Timms said he favours holding off on any decision of new courthouse construction until after it is made clear on the

need following the implementation of the province's online program to deal with certain POA matters.

"Several St. Catharines councillors defended the need for effective delivery of justice through two courts, parallel to the provincial two court system for Niagara," Timms said. "That there should be a court in St. Catharines and a court in Welland."

Timms said he believes, regardless of a decrease in court time as a result of the online resolution system, that there should be POA courts in both cities, albeit scaled back designs.

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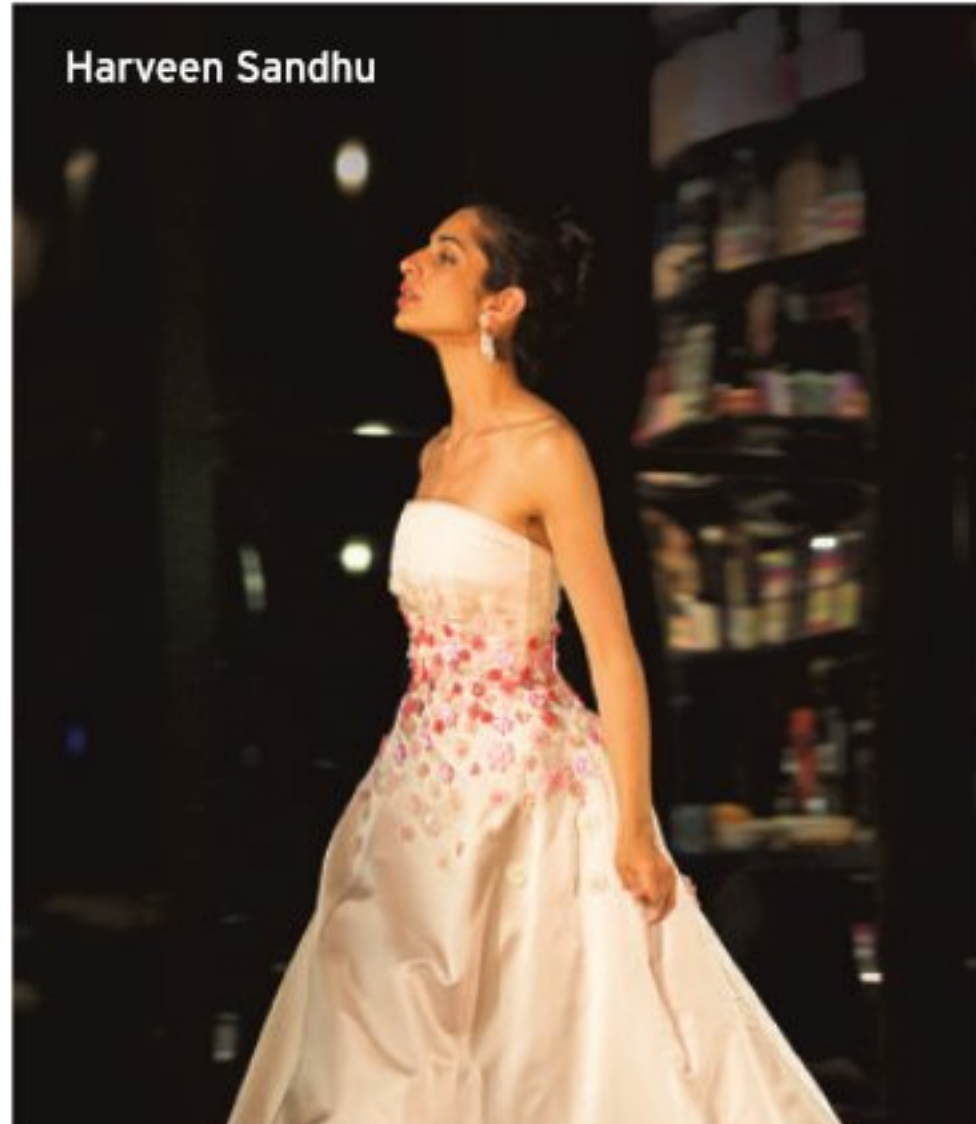
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■ **PESTS:** Brock prof cites climate change for growth in population

Tick time all across Niagara

ROB HOULE

Postmedia Network

They play a role in the ecosystem as a food source. But "really, they're just extremely annoying."

It's probably safe to say that when it comes to ticks, Brock University professor Fiona Hunter's sentiment is universally shared.

Most ticks in Niagara are nothing more than annoying dog ticks, happy to get a blood meal from an unwitting human or animal host.

However, more and more black-legged ticks — which have the potential of spreading the Lyme bacteria as they feed — are being found. While for decades black-legged, or deer ticks, have made their way north of the Canada/U.S. border in the plumage of birds, Hunter said only recently have they established a foothold.

"It's only in the last decade, I would say, that the conditions have been right to establish populations," she said. "I think it all has to do with global climate change."

The ticks might have managed to make it through the last two winters of record cold insulated by thicker than usual snow, Hunter said.

Not only did they make it through, but one of the two black-legged ticks submitted to Niagara Region so far this year that tested positive for Lyme disease was caught in January, said Peter Jekel, the region's manager of environmental services.

"Ticks can be active any time of year," he said. "In fact, we've had some submitted on the nicer days in January. Any time where the temperature is above 0°C, they can become active."

The other that tested positive for Lyme disease was brought into a region public health office in April, he said. Neither was picked off a human.

Those two were among the approximately 250 brought in for identification by members of the public. Of that number, Jekel said, 32 were black-legged ticks.

Last year, a total of 680 were submitted, with 35 to 50 identified as black-legged.

"The ratio seems to be higher this year, as well as the fact we are getting more ticks submitted this year," Jekel said.

He said residents in doubt should bring in ticks to one of the region's health unit offices in Welland, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, or Thorold for identification. He asks that the insects be carried in a jar, pill container or plastic sandwich bag.

To help people spot the potentially dangerous ticks, the region is offering wallet-type identification cards available for pickup at health units or on its website.

"I want to emphasize, people can bring them in at any time and we'll identify them," Jekel said.

Ticks lie in wait for a blood meal. They will wait, for instance, on the tip of a blade of grass and jump on a host.

Summer students employed by the region conduct "active drag" collecting in which the students, clothed in white Tyvek suits, sweep the landscape with cloth sheets.

"The ticks, if they're present, will attach to the sheet," Jekel said.

"If they are identified as black-legged, we will take them back to the office and have them looked at further."

■ BEER

No shortage of awards

PENNY COLES
Postmedia Network

Each award his beers win is more validation that Jon Downing was on the right track when he decided the time was right for a teaching brewery, and the place for it was Niagara College.

And there is no shortage of awards for the brewmaster and his students, who can now add another three medals from the U.S. Open Beer Championship held recently in Oxford, Ohio.

The event is one of the fastest growing competitions in the U.S., says Downing. This year the teaching brewery's products were competing with more than 4,000 beers and ciders made by professional breweries and home brewers from more than 20 countries.

Downing, with 30 years experience brewing beer, has helped establish more than 100 breweries around the world. In 2005, with a rapidly growing craft brewery industry showing no signs of slowing down and a shortage of experienced brewmasters, Downing decided it was time for a hands-on diploma program, similar to what Niagara College was doing with its teaching winery.

He approached the college about a teaching brewery, and although the planning took some time, Niagara College accepted its first batch of students to the brewmasters pro-

gram in September 2010, and won its first awards, two silvers and a bronze, at the U.S. open competition in 2011. It has continued to win awards in provincial, Canadian and world competitions.

At this year's U.S. open, the teaching brewery won a gold for its Brewmaster Stout in the foreign stout category, the first-ever medal for the oatmeal-based stout, with a 5.5% alcohol content. It's described as a "down-to-earth malty ale with rich dark hues and a thick, creamy texture," brewed using sophisticated English tradition.

Butler's Bitter, the brewery's multi-award winning beer, captured a silver in the bitter category. Developed as a celebration beer for the bicentennial of the War of 1812, the traditional light-bodied, English-style bitter with a 4.4% alcohol content won gold in its first appearance at the U.S. open in 2012, and bronze in 2013. It's also the college's World Beer Cup winner, collecting a bronze in 2014.

Awards such as these are great recognition for students and the teaching brewery, said Downing.

Butler's Bitter's repeated recognition shows the program is working as it should, he added. Each crop of students takes an established recipe, and dealing with several variables, produces a consistent quality that is the hallmark of a great beer, he says.



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■ **GAMBLING:** Niagara gaming sites need to step up after Toronto casino vote

Bets placed on Woodbine getting a casino

RAY SPITERI

Postmedia Network

Three years after the slots were yanked out of the Fort Erie Race Track — along with more than 200 jobs — Woodbine Racetrack is one stop away from becoming a full-fledged casino.

While Niagara politicians continue to call for a return of slots at Fort Erie, Toronto politicians voted to endorse the expansion of gambling at Woodbine. It will include 300 gaming tables and an additional 2,000 slot machines.

Woodbine Entertainment Group CEO Jim Lawson said the vote “means a whole lot” to the horse racing and breeding industry in the GTA and across the province.

But it's got some people in Fort Erie wondering: What about us?

“It provided a flow of revenue to actually support the horse-racing industry,” Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop said of the slots-at-racetracks program, which was introduced by Ontario in the 1990s.

“It also provided money to municipalities to improve infrastructure and provided good-paying jobs in the community.”

In 2012, in an effort to modernize the gaming industry, the provincial Liberals decided to close the slots in border towns because they weren't making as much money as they used to.

Ontario Lottery and Gaming closed three slots sites, includ-

ing Fort Erie, and started to look at strategic locations where the gaming market was underserved.

And OLG is not looking back. “It is important to note that OLG's old business model was not sustainable over the long term. For example, a decade ago, OLG's border casinos and slot facilities generated an annual profit of \$800 million. Today, that number is less than \$100 million.”

At a time when governments across Canada, and globally, are facing deficits, it “makes sense” for OLG to engage the private sector to make capital investments,” said Brum.

He said the GTA is an underserved gaming market.

“OLG's mandate is for a province-wide modernization. While there may be impacts to a specific site, OLG's goal is to ensure that all of our sites remain successful.”

Jim Thibert, CEO of the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium, said there needs to be a more comprehensive assessment of what gaming should be about in Ontario.

“Slots are a way for us to reach our own self-sustainability on site, just like any other track,” he said.

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said the track continues to see an increase in attendance, as well as on and off-track betting, while food-and-beverage sales are going up.

He said returning the slots would protect the track's 1,000 direct and indirect jobs, and bring back the jobs lost when the slots were pulled out.

“Three years ago, (Premier Kathleen) Wynne promised to integrate horse racing and gaming with the OLG, which would bring the slots back,” said Gates.

“But we've seen no action. This government continues to gallop right past Fort Erie.”

Toronto's decision could also have major ripple effects in Niagara Falls. The city hosts two casinos that employ 4,500 people.

As the region's No. 1 employer, Niagara Casinos spokesman Greg Medulun has said any significant expansion of gaming in the market will “certainly have a negative impact on our two casinos.”

He said more than 50% of Niagara Casinos' eight-million customers per year come from the GTA.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati said he understands why Toronto council voted the way they did.

But, he said, it's up to the province to ensure they grow the gaming pie, not “cut it up into smaller pieces.”

That's why he said he continues to wait for a request for proposal from OLG for a proposed 7,000-seat entertainment theatre that could attract big-name performers and events.

Cards going against Niagara

The record will show it was a 25-19 vote. A difference of six votes which may forever change Niagara Falls.

Those six votes now make it possible for Woodbine Racetrack to become the largest casino in Ontario, going from 2,700 slot machines to 5,000, and zero table games to 300.

Just like that, the Niagara Fallsview Casino — the province's \$1 billion gaming jewel when it opened 11 years ago — will lose its title.

Just like that, an already tired and outdated Casino Niagara becomes more irrelevant in the province's eyes.

And like always, Fort Erie is left wondering what, exactly, it did to the province to get continually dumped on. In recent months the town held out hope it could get back the slots at the Fort Erie Race Track, but it was always a long shot. In this shell game, Fort Erie will always lose to Toronto.

On July 8, Toronto city council voted 25-19 to allow a massive expansion to the Woodbine casino in Rexdale, two years after rejecting the same proposal. We dodged a bullet then, but we knew that gun was still loaded. Once Rob Ford left the mayor's chair, councillors who automatically rejected anything he supported — like expanded gaming in Toronto — would flip their vote. So I guess we can thank Ford's haters for this not happening sooner.

On behalf of a city about to get screwed — thanks!



JOHN LAW

Thanks for not mentioning Niagara Falls during your debate. The city which stands to lose millions because you decided your piece of the pie wasn't big enough.

Thanks for piling more dirt on Fort Erie, about to watch Woodbine get more than 2,000 extra slots three years after watching its own slots get taken away and more than 200 people put out of work.

And to the province, an especially big thanks for ignoring our mayor's pleas to expand and modernize our two casinos. Not to compete with Vegas, but with the Seneca Casino across the border, which spent \$26 million last year revamping itself. Niagara Falls' two casinos are old and getting older, and any hope of a make-over likely vanished July 8. The game was always rigged.

To put it into perspective, Toronto's proposal calls for a casino that will have more slots and table games than Fallsview Casino and Casino Niagara combined. It's not a crippling blow — people will still come to Niagara Falls because, well, we're Niagara Falls — but it will cut into the all-important Toronto market. A market that took on new significance when U.S. visitors slowed to a trickle.

Fifty percent of the casino's patrons come from Toronto. A large chunk of them will have less incentive to come now. That means, the annual \$20 million or so Niagara Falls gets in revenue from Ontario Lottery and Gaming will take a hit.

Which will affect your roads. Your parks. Inevitably your taxes.

The ripple effects of those six votes.

Can we blame Toronto? Of course not. Their council wasn't elected to look out for Niagara Falls. They saw an opportunity for more revenue, and — just as we did 20 years ago — decided it was worth the ramifications.

We didn't care about our neighbours when we opened Casino Niagara in 1996. No one on council stood up and said: “Won't this affect our friends in Windsor?” No, we saw that big fish and threw our best hook at it. Just like Toronto's doing now.

But we can be angry at the province for leaving us hanging. For making us compete shorthanded. For putting Niagara Falls aside — our need for upgrades, for a proper theatre — to await Toronto's decision.

This city, and our casinos, deserve better.

Woodbine's expansion still needs OLG's approval, but that's all but assured. Canada's largest city will get Canada's largest casino. That you can bet on.

As gambling lingo goes, the house always wins. Unless a bigger house comes along.

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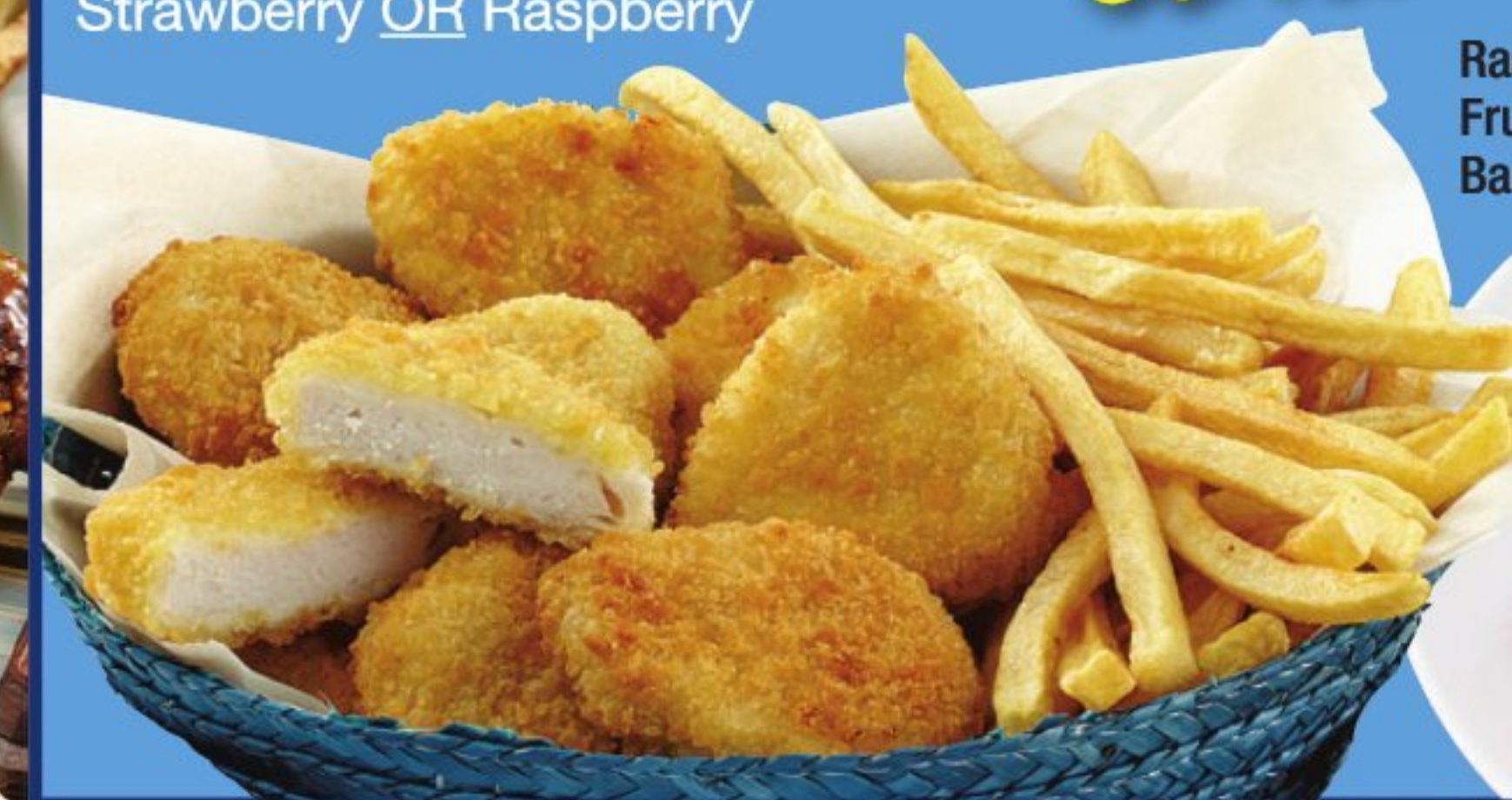
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